

Olu was married in Nigeria and came to the UK with her husband and 2 children in 2008.

Olu was referred to DASH in March 2015 when she went to her GP feeling suicidal - she was struggling to care for her children due to severe depression. Olu disclosed that her husband had been verbally and physically abusive throughout her marriage, for the previous 7 years -this included incidents of punching and kicking and strangulation . The abuse escalated when they came to the UK and assaults were often in front of her child.

The turning point came when she had recently discovered he had been having affairs with other women and had infected her with HIV. Olu had little support in the UK as most of her family were in Africa -she felt very ashamed, guilty and isolated – she explained that in her culture it was seen as shameful to divorce your husband , therefore she felt unable to return to Nigeria and yet had no support in the UK either. Olu felt trapped- she had fled from her husband previously, but returned as she had nowhere to stay and felt there was no way out. Olu was extremely tearful and unable to disclose some of the details of the abuse initially, but as she gained the trust of the IDVA, she started to gain confidence.

- IDVA implemented a strategy meeting with police, housing, social services and adult safeguarding to ensure all support was in place and agencies were aware of the risk to Olu, her children and also to the public.
- The Dash Charity BAME IDVA supported Olu and encourage her to report the abuse to police-her husband was subsequently arrested, charged with GBH and rape and was placed on conditional bail, so not permitted to contact her or the children. Olu went on to report further incidents to police with the support of the IDVA, when he subsequently threatened to kill her. Knowing she was now being supported, Olu was now willing to support the criminal proceedings and is waiting to give evidence at trial. Her husband is currently remanded in prison.
- IDVA managed to get support for Olu's mental health – prior to IDVA intervention, she had held a rope and a knife to her own throat with the intention of committing suicide. IDVA

signposted Olu to mental health services, spoke to her daily , helping her understand the impact of the abuse and helped her implement coping strategies to manage these feelings.

- IDVA accompanied Olu to a solicitor and subsequently civil court where she obtained an injunction and other orders to further protect her and her children
- IDVA provided documentation to assist with her immigration application which was ultimately successful
- Social services did not intervene as Olu was coping much better and was able to protect the children. The eldest child was signposted by IDVA to DASH CST where they had 1:1 therapeutic support
- IDVA signposted Olu to health and support agencies for medical treatment and counselling for HIV.
- IDVA used BAME Power and Control Wheel tool and other tools to help Olu recognise the tactics her husband used to abuse her , and to help her recognise that this was not her fault.

Olu gradually began to focus on the future and a life without abuse.

**Outcome:**

IDVA has continued to support Olu for the past 4 months – there has been no contact from her husband since, so she is feeling much safer. The court enforced an order to allow Olu and her children to remain at their current property so they were not made homeless. Olu's mental and physical health has improved immensely and she is now starting part-time work to support herself and her children. Olu has engaged with a local voluntary agency, Destiny Support, which provides activities for the local BAME community and is now starting to create a new support network for herself.

Olu said that I would not be alive today if it wasn't for my worker – life did not seem worth living if every day was a living hell. Now it seems like that was a nightmare and this is more than I could ever have dreamed of. For me and my children to be safe and happy, for this I will forever be thankful.